



Orangeburg County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

Board Chair:
Dr. Willie J. Heggins
Executive Director: Sonia
Elise Gass
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**Total children in county under
age 6: 7,395**

**Children under age 6 living in
poverty: 13.5%**

Orangeburg County Highlights

- QEG – 4 centers assisted
- Scholarships - 44 granted
- PAT - 76 children assisted
- PAT - 70 parents assisted
- Training - 30 Childcare Centers

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Orangeburg County First Steps (OCFS) is working to ensure that all the children in our county arrive to the first grade ready to learn. In an effort to do so; the OCFS board has implemented various programs to remove barriers that might prevent children from reaching this goal. During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, 324 children were directly assisted by Orangeburg County First Steps, as well as 261 adults/families. There were 68 staff members from 30 child care facilities who received training instruction and technical assistance on various subjects during the year; 606 children attend these facilities. Our parent educators made 934 home visits. Through the 4K Expansion program, 26 4-K slots were established. Finally, 2,317 books were distributed through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.

Orangeburg County boasts a population of 89,952 people. According to 2005 South Carolina data, Orangeburg County has 7,395 children under the age of six, and 13.5 % or 998 of these children live in poverty. Also, 40% of the county's children under the age of six live in a single-parent household. The majority of these parents do not have a high school diploma. Seventy-four (74) babies were born to parents under the age of 18. With an average, annual household income for these (single) parents of less than \$15,000, it was determined that many parents could not seek quality childcare for their children because of the high cost.

The Orangeburg County First Steps board took all these factors into consideration when choosing the 2007-2008 programs. The Quality Enhancement, Child Care Scholarships and Dolly Parton Imagination Library provided quality learning environments, assistance with child care and a book a month to the participants. The Parents as Teachers program teaches parents how to be their children's first and best teacher.

With your support, Orangeburg County First Steps will build educational foundations on which our children will grow and succeed.

Sincerely,

Sonia Elise Gass,
Executive Director

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Parents as Teachers:

Program description: The Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is designed to provide parents with access to the support they need, to strengthen their families and promote the optimal development of preschool students. The program goals were to fund three Parent Educators; ensure that each parent educator visits twenty (20) families, twice a month, to provide parenting education and skills training; and to have parent educators conduct group meetings, screenings and organize a resource network. Through this program Orangeburg County First Steps sought to improve parental knowledge of parenting skills using the Ages and Stages curriculum, to improve parent participation in various activities, and to increase the training levels of parent educators.

Program results:

- 7 Parent Educators made visits to 70 Adults and 76 Children
- Using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) which measures parent child interaction in various situations to assess parental skill level, test scores showed a 26.30% improvement. The Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI) results showed that the adults improved by 20.30% and the children by 24.0%.
- These assessment results indicate that parents are learning how to help prepare their children for a lifetime of learning.
- This program works with other services offered by Orangeburg County First Steps such as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and the Scholarship program. Many of the parents enrolled in the parenting program also received a child care scholarship so that their children could attend certified learning centers. Each child under the age of five also received a free book a month.
- Through this program, more than 59 referrals were made to agencies such as BabyNet, One Stop Workforce Development, DHEC, DSS, and Adult Education at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College.
- Five (5) individuals received their GED.
- 630 home visits were made.

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Quality Enhancement Grant

Program description: Orangeburg County First Steps continues to seek to accomplish the following goals: 1) to improve the overall quality of child care offered in Orangeburg County; 2) to improve the qualifications of individuals working in child care centers; 3) to improve the knowledge and skills of child care workers regarding early childhood growth and development; and 4) to improve the number of children leaving child care testing ready for the first grade.

Program results:

- This program impacted an average of 72 children. Center directors received training in several areas and also received personalized technical assistance.
- This program showed an average improvement of 25% in the areas associated with preparing children for the first grade.
- \$20,000 in supplies were purchased for the four centers involved, to assist them in reaching the next level of certification. The materials also helped them to provide an environment where every child has the opportunity to be ready for the first grade.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Program description: The goals of this strategy are to make available approximately thirty-five (35) full-time child care scholarships for children who meet the ABC Child Care eligibility criteria; to increase the number of parents receiving support to strengthen their families; to increase the number of children receiving comprehensive services; to reduce the number of risk factors being identified through early intervention; and to increase the number of children enrolled in quality preschool programs.

Program results:

- 44 children were granted scholarships during this fiscal year.
- The children were placed in Orangeburg County First Steps approved child care centers to ensure that the children have the opportunity to arrive to school ready to learn.
- Monitoring visits were made to ensure that the children were attending child care regularly, and were receiving age-appropriate instruction.

TRAINING

Program description: The goals of this strategy are to provide free training to all child care center owners, operators and employees. Orangeburg County First Steps will assess the needs of the centers to determine the topics presented. Each center will receive a flier with the trainings, dates and how to register. The trainings will be open first to centers participating in the OCFS Quality Enhancement program, then on a first-come, first-served basis to other registrants.

Program results:

- Eight trainings were conducted
- 68 child care workers and program directors attended the trainings provided at no cost to the attendees
- The child care workers represented 30 centers
- These trainings provided the DSS hours needed to retain certification
- The trainings were on topics determined by surveying the participants. They were
 - Mandated Reporting
 - Child growth and development
 - Program Administration
 - Blood Borne Pathogens
 - Child Abuse and Neglect

- Child Growth and Development
- Curriculum Activities I
- Curriculum Activities II

EARLY EDUCATION.

Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Program description: The goals of this strategy are to provide a book a month for all children under the age of five in Orangeburg County; to increase the number of children with access to books; to increase the developmental preparedness of the of children in Orangeburg County; to increase the knowledge and skills of children and to increase parent participation in reading activities.

Program results:

- 149 children received a free book a month through this program
- Pre and Post surveys indicated that the parents were reading more to their children as a result of this program

S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

Program description: CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

Program results:

- 31 students served
- Six providers offered CDEPP 4K classes
 - Happy Land CDC
 - Raggedy Ann and Andy
 - South Carolina State University CDLC
 - Kids in Motion
 - Back to Basics
 - Kids 2000

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$ 407,738
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	28,871
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	0.00
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	150,031
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	0.00
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	0.00
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	8,740.00
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	5,597
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	0
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	44,415
TOTAL:	\$645,391.00

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
Administrative Functions	\$ 66,902
Programmatic Functions	94,042
Parents as Teachers	85,896
Child Quality Enhancement	47,449
Child Care Training	22,075
Scholarships	103,703
Dolly Parton Imagination	4,353
Countdown to Kindergarten	4,029
Scholarships	25,297
CDEPP – 4K	147,230
InKind Donations	44,415
	0
Indirect Programmatic Functions	0
Administrative Functions	0
TOTAL:	\$645,391.00

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Adriane Johnson	35.00
Albertha Glover	35.00
Ayanna Glover	35.00
Barbara Butler	35.00
Bertie Howard	35.00
Carolyn Williams	35.00
Clara Robinson	100.00
Deborah Brunson	35.00
Demier Richardson	35.00
Earline Irick	35.00
Edna Hailey	35.00
Jamison Pharmacy	1,000
Johnny Murdaugh	35.00
Kaplan	500.00
Marian White	35.00
Mathew Henderson	35.00
Minnie Johnson	35.00
Okonite Company	250.00
Ola Stokes	30.00
Queen Brailey	3500
Robert Thomas	25.00
Romaine Anderson	30.00
Sam & Gail Richardson	\$ 50.00
Sonia Gass	35.00
Vivian Steadman	35.00
Willie J. Heggins	35.00
TOTAL:	\$6,080.00

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 16%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

<i>Name</i>	<i>Board Category</i>
Anderson, Romaine	Parent of Preschool Child
Artis, Marie Hemberg	ECE
Brailey, Queen	Legislative App
Brunson, Deborah	OCSD#3 App
Butler, Barbara	ECE
Carson, Rose	DSS Appointee
Davis, Sheryl	DHEC Appointee
Dawkins-Glover, Ayanna	Parent of Preschool Child
Fields, Jay	Parent of Preschool child
Ford, Nancy	OCSD#5 App
Glover, Albertha	Family Education, Training & Support Provider
Green, Brenda	Transportation Provider
Hailey, Edna - Assistant Secretary	Pre-K Primary Educator
Heggins, Willie - Board Chair	Faith
Howard, Bertie - Secretary	Head Start
Irick, Earline	Library
Jeffries, James - Treasurer	Health Care
Jenkins, Janice	Transportation Provider
Johnson, Minnie	Child Care/ECD Education Pro
Littlejohn, Shelia M.	Child Care/ECD Education Pro
Murdaugh, Johnnie	Business
Reed, Trese	Early Childhood Education
Richardson, Demier - Vice Chair	Non-Profit Organization
Shaw, Jackie	Legislative App
Steadman, Vivian	Senate Appointee
Stokes, Ola M.	Pre-K Educator
Watson, George - Chaplain	Faith
White, Barbara	Non-Profit Organization
Williams, Carolyn	ECE

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, Orangeburg County First Steps implemented programs to remove barriers that might prevent children from learning. After carefully reviewing our data, it was determined that these programs are working. Children and parents are benefiting from early intervention, more centers are being impacted and 4-year olds are receiving the opportunity to attend kindergarten, because of our programs. We have established partnerships with local agencies and are able to provide more and better services because of these collaborations. Our FY 2009 plans are to continue these services and improve in any area that demonstrated a weakness. Our vision is to have every child in Orangeburg County ready for the first grade, and we will continue to self-evaluate to ensure we are reaching this goal.



Rock Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church

405 Rock Hill Church Road
P.O. Box 620
Vance, South Carolina 29163

Church Phone: (803) 496-7020
Pastor's Office: (803) 496-9015
Reverend Melvin Coleman, Pastor

Fax: (803) 496-9516
E-mail: rockhillame@tri-countyelectric.net

First Steps has inspired Rock Hill Daycare Center tremendously. We are grateful for the Quality Enhancement Grant 2007-2008. We've accomplished a lot; including a fresh new look with:

1. Learning Supplies and Activities
2. Bedding Equipment
3. Baby Nurseries
4. Nursery Room
5. PlayRoom
6. Game time with Activities
7. Playground Equipment and Utensils.

First Step also provided the necessary classes for DSS Regulations requirements. Thank you for all that you have done for our DayCare.

Sincerely

Rock Hill DayCare Center

"GOD OUR FATHER, CHRIST OUR REDEEMER, MAN OUR BROTHER"

Little Lambs CDC
1450 Ridgewood Dr.
Orangeburg, SC 29115
(803) 531-5533



South Lake Child Care
320 South Lake Dr
Lexington, SC 29072
(803) 957-2411

September 29, 2008

Dear Mrs. Gass,

Several years ago when I first heard about First Steps I was very reluctant to gather information about the good work that First Steps was doing. My first feeling was that First Steps was just another State run organization that was bound to be in a mess as other State run organizations were at the time. I was uninformed and uneducated as to all the good that the County partnerships were doing for the children of the State of South Carolina.

After hearing about some of the other centers in the Orangeburg area utilizing the resources provided by First Steps, I decided that I would investigate the opportunity to my Center. After receiving information and training from our local First Steps office I was pleasantly surprised to learn that we would qualify for the Quality Enhancement Grant. With the two QEG grants that we have received, we have transformed our dull and boring center into a colorful acting learning environment. We have learning centers rather than tubs of toys. We have colorful carpets for circle time rather than dull flooring. We also have manipulatives and puzzles to develop the children's fine motor skills. All of these improvements have been courtesy of Orangeburg County First Steps.

Little Lambs CDC would like to thank First Steps for the furnishings and activity centers as well as for the trainings in room arrangement, child abuse and neglect recognition and curriculum planning. Our children will benefit greatly from the improvements provided by First Steps.

Thank you again for all you have done for Little Lambs.


Sincerely yours,

Angela Tarrant

Dear Orangeburg County First Steps Program:

I would first like to start out by saying how grateful I am for the assistance that this program has given me for child care. As a single mother who works and goes to school I found that paying for child care expenses can get difficult, but with the help from this program I have been able to work towards my future goals in life for my daughter and myself. Nowadays there are a number of single parent homes and it's hard to find support for those individuals that are determined to be successful one day but with programs like ABC Voucher it brings new hope for those determined individuals. Again, I would like to say thank you for the support that this program has given my daughter and I. I really hope they continue to bless our community with their support.

Thank you,



Claire Steverson
A proud ABC Voucher client

The Orangeburg County First Steps Program

From: Charlene R. Nkhata

The funds provided through the First Steps program has been a tremendous help within the last year. I see the program as a temporary transition in assisting with child care expenses until I am able to attain the goal I have set for myself in being fully self-sufficient. As a single mother with two children, although not planned, there were times I thought it was not even worth getting up and going to work on many days. I was so close to giving up. It is tempting to stay at home and rely on government assistance for basic necessities: food, shelter, health care, etc.

But then I am constantly reminded that it is so easy to give up and I did not want the easy way out. As a Social Worker, I challenge my parents all the time to not simply sit back and rely on others to assist. A lot of times, I find myself encouraging myself as I encourage them.

So in conclusion, I am grateful for programs such as the Orangeburg County First Steps program. The program provides temporary assistance for a temporary need. The program is very beneficial for those parents who really need temporary assistance. Please continue to meet the needs of those within the community!

Once again,

Thanks!!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Charlene R. Nkhata', written in a cursive style.

Charlene R. Nkhata

**Kimberly C. Wearing
1090 Colleton Street
Orangeburg, South Carolina 29115**

To Whom It May Concern:

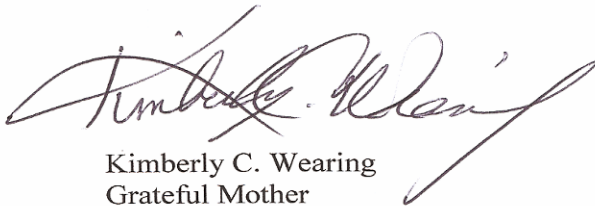
Our three-year-old, Olivia, has been in your program from her infancy. She has enjoyed receiving mail each and every month, especially a book.

Now that she is three, we go to the library twice a week, to fill in the reading space until she receives her new Dollywood book at the end of the month. She does carry her new book to her playgroups to share in the new excitement of another story.

Each day she is excited for her daddy to come home from work to read her one of her new books. At nighttime, I have the privilege of giving her her bedtime story.

In our three-year-old, we can see the growth of her loving to read and loving to appreciate learning something new. We thank the reading program for our monthly treasure.

Sincerely,



Kimberly C. Wearing
Grateful Mother

email address * wwearing@sc.rr.com

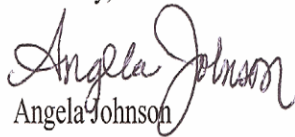
home phone * 803-531-4811

Angela Johnson
328 Fair Street
Orangeburg, SC 29115

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my thanks to Orangeburg County First Steps for having such a great book program. The Dolly book program has been a blessing to my family. My son LaDarius looks forward to receiving his book each month. The program has given him the opportunity to continue his love for reading. I am thankful for the access to these books. My other son Deoreon was enrolled in the program until he turned five. He enjoyed getting his books also and misses them. He is now helping his brother read his book when it comes in the mail. I really like this program.

Sincerely,


Angela Johnson

The family literacy program has benefited me since I enrolled. My parent educator, Ms. Terry has helped me in many aspects of my life and has taught me skills that will aide me in caring for my child.

The free books my child receives allows me to read with my child and saves me money. I am grateful for the assistance with child care with the voucher program because this allows my child to be in a place where she can learn while I am in school. We both have the chance to learn. I am able to continue my education so that I can get a good paying job to take care of me and my child.

Ms. Terry has helped me work with other agencies that has helped me with employment and counseling. She visits with me and my child and helps me to understand her development and growth. The program has helped me be aware of and better understand my child's needs.

I am thankful for the literacy and first steps program which has been a great help to me and my family. We have a better chance at success with all this help and we plan to make the best of it.

Shalyn Ladson

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Orangeburg County

Total Children Under Six: 7,395

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

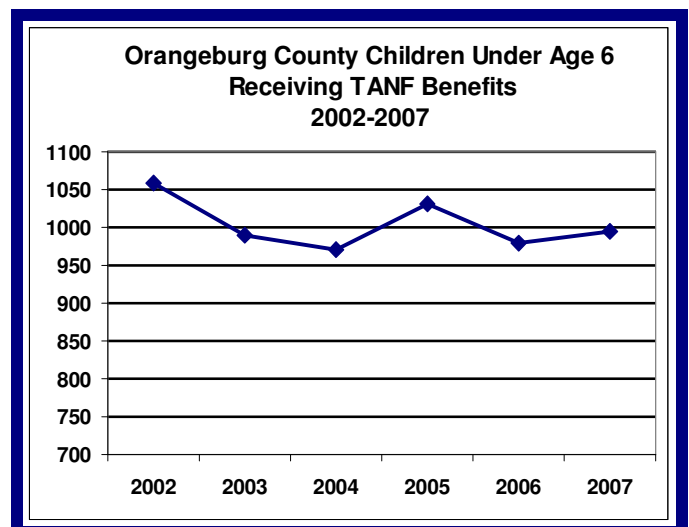
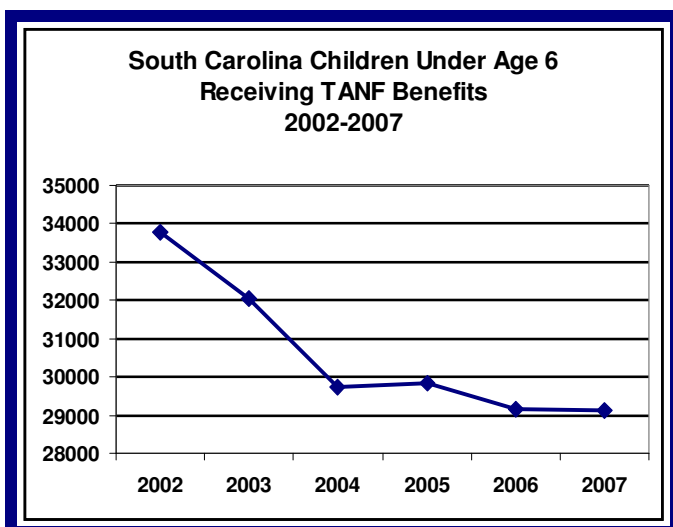
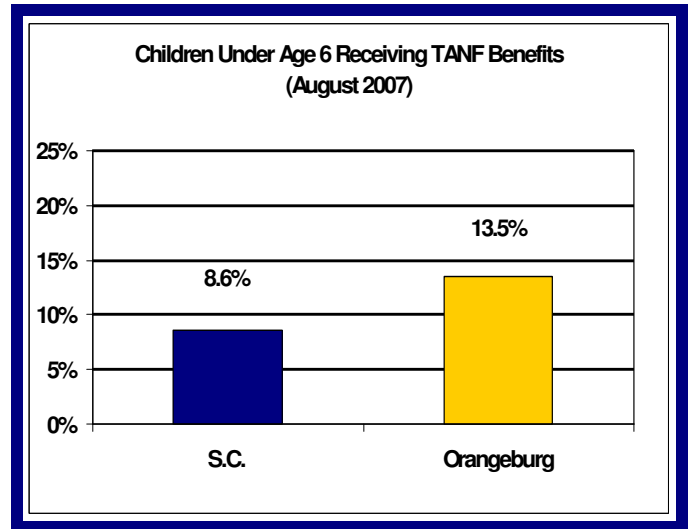
Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

Orangeburg County (2007): 13.5%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 8 Orangeburg County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

995 of Orangeburg County’s 7,395 children under 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Orangeburg County

Total Children Under Six: 7,395

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

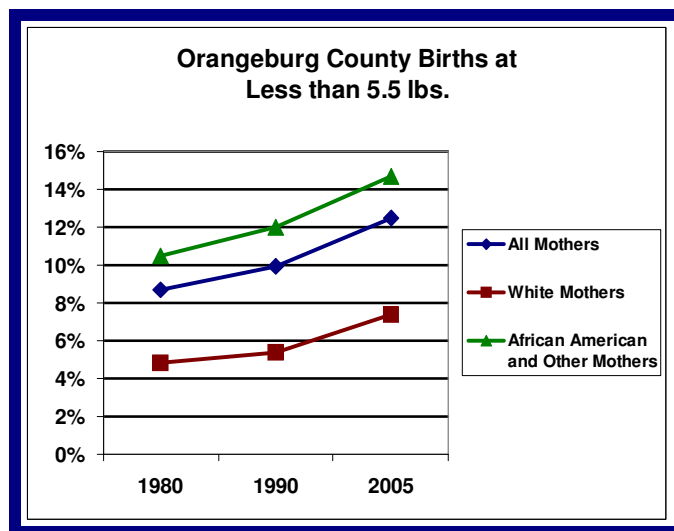
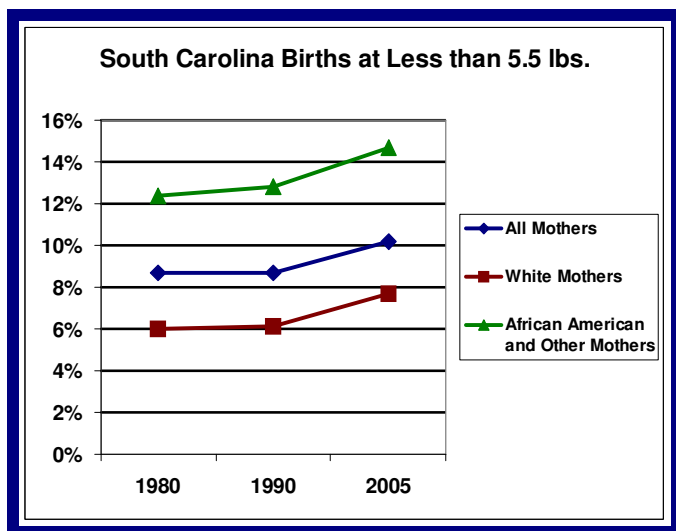
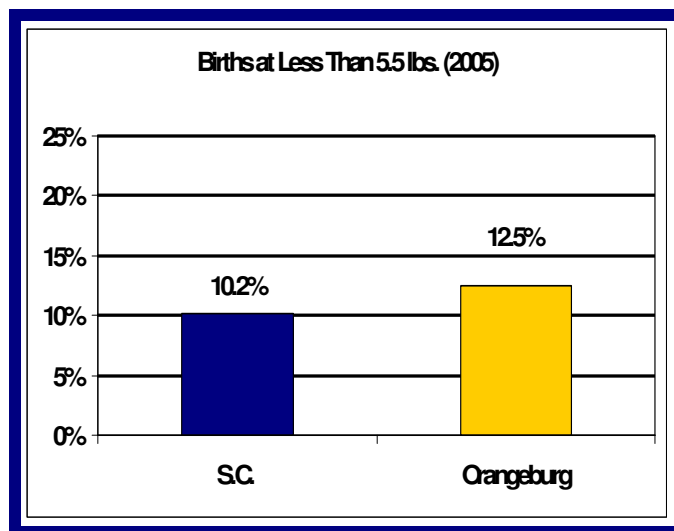
Orangeburg County (2005): 12.5%

Fast Fact: 1 in 8 Orangeburg County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

169 of the 1,354 children born in Orangeburg County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Orangeburg County

Total Children Under Six: 7,395

BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

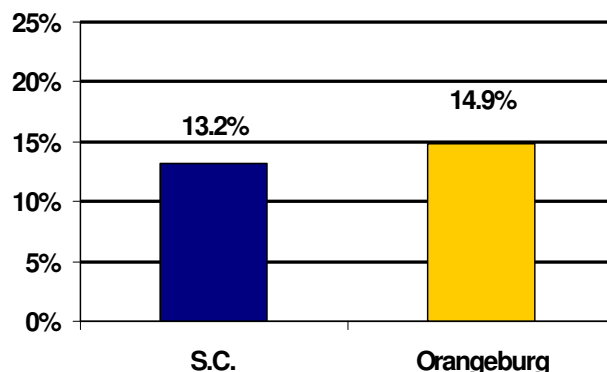
Orangeburg County (2005): 14.9%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 7 Orangeburg County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

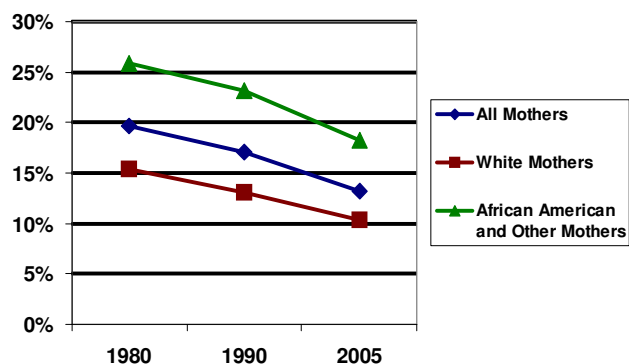
Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

202 of the 1,354 children born in Orangeburg County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

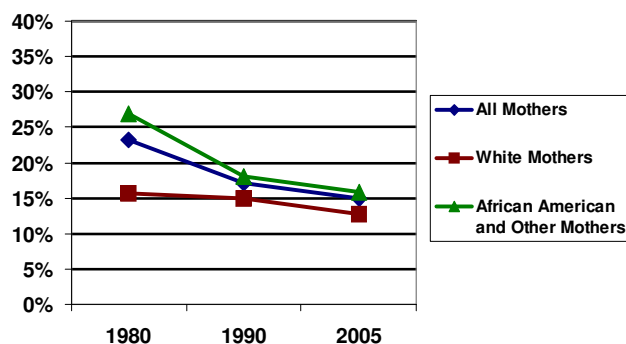
Births to Teenage Mothers (2005)



South Carolina Births to Teenage Mothers



Orangeburg County Births to Teenage Mothers



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Orangeburg County

Total Children Under Six: 7,395

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

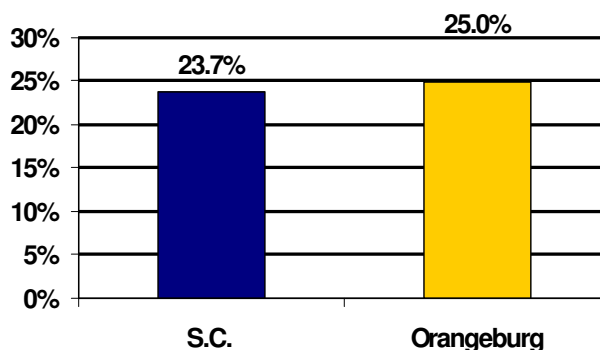
Orangeburg County (2005): 25.0%

Fast Fact: 1 in 4 children in Orangeburg County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

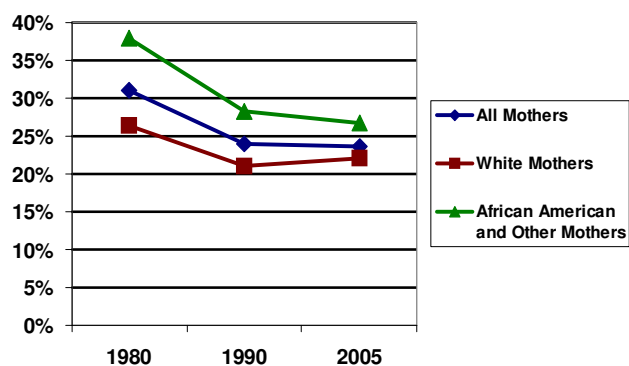
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

338 of the 1,354 children born in Orangeburg County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Orangeburg County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma

